

Frequently Asked Questions for All Tracks in the M.S. Program in Psychology

Does the program offer a variety of concentrations/tracks?

There are two main tracks in the M.S. in Psychology program:

- **Clinical/Counseling track** - This track is geared toward the licensed professional counselor license (LPC) in Georgia. Students complete courses in core areas of psychology, psychological assessment, and psychotherapy. A thesis option is available in this track. Students in this track complete 600 hours of clinical internship experience.
- **Experimental track** - This track is further subdivided into two subtracks
 - General Experimental – This subtrack is geared toward students who wish to go on to a Ph.D. program in psychology. Students complete courses in core areas of psychology and gain significant research experience. The General Experimental subtrack is the only track that requires a thesis project. Students also complete 150 hours of a research internship experience.
 - Applied Experimental – This subtrack is geared toward students who wish to work in a research or teaching related area at the master's level. Students complete courses in core areas of psychology and complete 450 hours of research internship experience.

Does the program prepare students for admission into a doctoral program in psychology?

The General Experimental subtrack is geared toward those who wish to apply to Ph.D. programs after the master's degree. The Clinical/Counseling track can also prepare students for application to Ph.D. or Psy.D. programs, but its main emphasis is on practice at the master's level. Students work with a faculty mentor to identify and work toward career goals. Their mentor can help guide them to pursue experiences that will be most helpful in preparing for doctoral applications.

Is the Program Accredited?

The Clinical/Counseling track of the M.S. in Psychology program is accredited by the Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council (MPCAC). MPCAC is the only organization that accredits masters programs in psychology. The American Psychological Association (APA) only accredits doctoral programs. There is no accreditation available for experimental psychology tracks or programs.

What financial Assistance is available?

The program offers a limited number of graduate assistantships that provide professional development experience in teaching and research related activities and offer tuition remission and a small stipend. Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis and require 10 hours of work for the department per week. Applicants who wish to be considered for a graduate assistantship should email the Director of Graduate Studies, Sabina Widner, expressing interest in being considered for an assistantship.

Can you complete the program as a part-time student?

The M.S. program in Psychology is geared toward full-time students. All students begin in fall semester and advance through the program in cohorts. Because many of the courses are sequenced, it would be challenging to finish the program in a timely manner as a part-time student.

Does the program offer evening or online courses?

At this time, the program does not offer online graduate courses. Most of the courses are offered in the day-time and it is not possible to complete the program as an evening student only.

Does the program require summer attendance?

All tracks in the M.S. program require year-around attendance in order to graduate in a timely manner. Some graduate courses are only offered during the summer term.

What is the student/faculty ratio in the program?

The program admits 15-20 students per year: up to 12 in the Clinical/Counseling track, and 5 to 8 in the Experimental track. At most, the student to faculty ratio is 20 to 1. Many classes, particularly the counseling based courses, have a smaller faculty to student ratio. For example, the internship courses tend to have 8 or fewer students in each section.

Are classes taught primarily by full-time faculty?

The vast majority of the graduate courses are taught by full-time faculty members. At present only one course (Career Counseling) is taught by an adjunct faculty member.

Are there opportunities for professional activities, such as research or attending conferences?

Professional opportunities beyond the classroom are important markers of quality for a graduate program. Professional opportunities offered by the M.S. Program include:

- **Research** - All of the tenure-track faculty members in the Department of Psychological Sciences are active researchers and graduate students are encouraged to become involved in research beyond their classroom experiences.
- **Conferences** - Students are encouraged to attend local, regional, and national professional research or teaching related conferences and many do. For example, Augusta University's Graduate School hosts its own Graduate Research Day conference, and many students attend and present research at the Southeastern Psychological Association's annual conference. While funding is limited, there are opportunities to apply for financial support for conference presentations and travel.
- **Internships** - The program offers many internship options in the areas of research, teaching, and clinical/counseling work. Students on the Clinical/Counseling track are required to complete 600 hours of internship experience. General Experimental students complete 150 hours of research internship and Applied Experimental students complete 450 hours of research and/or teaching internships.

- **Graduate Assistantships** - The program offers a limited number of graduate assistantships that provide professional development experience in teaching and research related activities and offer tuition remission and a stipend.

Does the program require an interview prior to admission?

An interview is required for admission to the program. The Graduate Admissions Committee will contact competitive applicants for a telephone interview starting in early March. The Department of Psychological Sciences also hosts a Graduate Open House each year in early spring which offers applicants an opportunity to meet faculty members and current students. Individuals interested in the graduate program are also invited to contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Sabina Widner, (swidner@augusta.edu) to set up a face to face interview and a tour of the department.

What mentoring does the program offer?

Each graduate student is matched with a mentor at the end of their first semester in the program from the tenure-track faculty members in the Department of Psychological Sciences. This faculty member works with the student to identify career goal and monitors the students' progress through the program. As student may select more than one mentor depending upon their interests and plan of study. For example, a student may have one faculty member as a career mentor and another as a research mentor.

Will I have the opportunity to develop a sense of community with my fellow graduate students?

Graduate school is the perfect time to begin making lifelong connections that will help sustain you throughout your professional career. The M.S. Program in Psychology encourages comradery and collegiality among students. The program follows a cohort model. Each fall, a group of students enters the program together. Typically, cohorts form a strong bond. Cohort members often study together, spend time in extracurricular activities together, and travel to conferences together.

Can I transfer graduate courses into the program from another master's program?

The policy of the Graduate School and the M.S. Program is to allow up to 9 credit hours of graduate credit to transfer into a master's program at Augusta University. Such a transfer is not guaranteed and must be approved the by Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair of Psychological Sciences.

What kinds of jobs do students get with the master's degree in psychology?

We are proud to note that our alumni report a 94% employment rate in professional positions.

Applied Experimental students often work in research related areas in the public and private sector. Recent job titles for graduates include Project Manager, Research Analysisist, Research Associate, College Lecturer, and Careers Skills Coordinator.

Clinical/Counseling students most often work in counseling related areas. Recent job titles for graduates include Therapist, Counselor, Forensic Interviewer, Victim Advocacy Coordinator, Disabilities Services Coordinator, and Psychometrist.

How can I get more information about the M.S. program in Psychology?

The Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Sabina Widner, is the primary contact for the graduate program. She can be reached at swidner@augusta.edu, or (706) 667-4613.

FAQs Related to Clinical/Counseling Track Only

Does the Clinical/Counseling track expose you to a range of theoretical orientations?

The Clinical/Counseling track embraces an integrative approach and exposes students to a number of theoretical perspectives. Students receive exposure to psychodynamic, humanistic, behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, and mindfulness based therapeutic orientations.

Does the Clinical/Counseling track infuse evidence-based practices in its training?

Mental health practitioners are asked to be accountable to outside agencies for the treatment plans they employ with clients, as well as to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Evidence-based practices are central to our field and an ethical imperative when working with the public. The Clinical/Counseling track infuses evidenced-based practices throughout the program. Students also receive a strong foundation in theory and research.

What is the importance of licensure?

There are several mental health related licenses recognized in the state of Georgia. A professional license allows a mental health practitioner to practice independently under the law and to qualify for many types of insurance reimbursement. Each state controls its own licensure process.

What are the licenses related to mental health practice?

The licenses related to mental health practice at the master's level in Georgia are: Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Other states may have somewhat different mental health licenses and titles.

Does the program provide you with all the credits you need to obtain licensure?

The M.S. program in psychology (Clinical/Counseling track) is geared toward preparing graduates for the Licensed Professional Counselor license (LPC) in Georgia. Licensure requires a given number of credits as well as coverage of specific content areas. In addition, some states require the program to be accredited by particular organizations. The program has an excellent track record of preparing students for the LPC in Georgia; in fact, our alumni surveys show a 100% pass rate for the national counselor licensing exam (NCE).

As is the case for all master's programs in psychology around the country, a degree from Augusta University's M.S. program may not meet criteria for licensure in other states. While many of our students have been successful in obtaining the LPC license in other states, there is no guarantee that future students will be eligible for licensure in states outside of Georgia. Licensure rules are also subject to change from time to time.

For further information about the LPC requirements in Georgia please visit <http://rules.sos.ga.gov/gac/135-5>

For more information about the M.S. program in Psychology at Augusta University please Contact Dr. Sabina Widner, Director of Graduate Studies at swidner@augusta.edu or (706) 667-4613.